

18 July 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Immediate Plans for AQUATONE

1. After some hours of reflection, I strongly urge reconsideration of certain of the decisions with regard to AQUATONE that were made in the Director's office at the end of the afternoon on 17 July 1956.

2. I can not help wondering whether the purely political implications of an immediate and probably final cessation of operations in Europe have been fully considered by the Secretary of State. As you are aware, it will appear to the Soviet authorities that their protest accomplished its purpose literally within hours of its delivery. Is it really desirable to demonstrate in this way both the closeness of our control over these operations and our extreme sensitivity to a diplomatic protest even when no evidence can be adduced in its support. Do we wish to demonstrate again to [REDACTED] as in the case of GENETRIX, that we will not carry through projects of this sort in the face of a protest. I would think that at a minimum one or two missions should be flown over satellite territories and at least one penetration made into the USSR if only to avoid what seems to me to be disastrous political consequences of a demonstration of timidity. I recognize this is a matter for the Secretary of State. If he is not worried of the political considerations or if he believes it is futile to reopen this matter with the President, there is certainly no move that can be made from this Agency.

3. Your instructions to me of 17 July were to continue the presently planned procurement of equipment. I recommend that this decision be reviewed and that I be authorized immediately to cancel contracts for the procurement of (a) electronic system 4 -- which is advanced automatic ferret equipment, and (b) additional B configuration cameras. I also propose to re-examine our planned procurement of other items and will submit further recommendations for cancellation within the next few days. Frankly, I do not see how we can justify the expenditure of funds for items that will not be ready for a number of months simply in the hope the President's views will completely change in the interim.

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- 2 -

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4. With respect to the construction now in progress at [REDACTED] in Germany, I believe the Air Force should be advised that there is little prospect we will ever wish to operate from that base so they may reach a prompt decision as to the completion, modification, or suspension of work now in progress there. Although I believe it has already progressed so far that they will probably carry most of it through to completion, there would seem to be no justification for pressure to meet a deadline. In any event, since the Air Force is our partner in this enterprise, I believe they should be formally advised at this time of the changed outlook.

5. Although I do not recommend any modification at this time of the decision to install a detachment at Adana as soon as that base is ready, I would like to emphasize for the record the basis of that decision. The fact of the matter is that there is very little likelihood of our being able to penetrate the USSR from the south without detection. We have already flown missions over the Crimea and have been tracked more accurately there than in Central Russia. It is no exaggeration to say that the only prospect of being able to penetrate without tracking is for flights over the Caspian Sea. Accordingly, if the President's present views remain substantially unchanged, we will never be permitted to operate from Adana. Viewed in this light, the deployment of a unit to that location can be justified only as a preparation for the contingency that the President will change his mind in a few weeks time. I suppose this can be justified on the ground that we have already spent some [REDACTED] to little purpose and we may as well spend a bit more on the off chance that things will change for the better.

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SIGNED

RICHARD M. BISSELL, JR.
Project Director

RMB:gjg (18 Jul 56)

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